THE
CATHOLIC RADICAL

"...to foster a society based on creed instead of greed." Peter Maurin

February/March 2018 ***Price: For whatever it's worth.***

Corruption at the Top

by Scott Schaeffer-Duffy

CORPORATIONS
We the People
insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common
and our Posterity, do Ordain and establish this Constitu
Article I.

A 2013 report in India indicated that from the smallest transactions to multi-million dollar corporate and government contracts, bribery and corruption are rampant. Low-paid bureaucrats routinely supplement their income by demanding bribes. Individuals and businesses use bribes to circumvent enormous delays that otherwise occur in seeking governmental services, approvals, and documents. Bribes to the police are sometimes the only way to avoid larger fines or jail sentences. Corporate executives and governmental ministers enrich themselves through various schemes that go unpunished. As one might expect, the report concluded, "Corruption is a double jeopardy for the poor, who are hardest hit by economic decline, are most reliant on the provision of public services and are least capable of paying the extra costs associated with bribery, fraud, and the misappropriation of economic privileges."

Here in the United States, we sneer at countries where a person stopped for speeding might bribe a cop to tear up the ticket. We expect corrupt civil servants to be fired, if not prosecuted.

While it is not insignificant that most low-level governmental employees do not feather their nests at the public's expense, we are kidding ourselves to think our government is not corrupt.

As of 2016, there were 11,143 registered lobbyists and upward to 90,000 more unregistered in Washington, DC. Their spending rose from $1.45 billion in 1998 to $3.15 billion in 2016. Lobbyists now spend more than double what the government allocates to fund the US Senate and House of Representatives. *The Atlantic* reported in December, 2017: "For every dollar spent on lobbying by labor unions and public-interest groups together, large corporations and their associations now spend $34. Of the 100 organizations that spend the most on lobbying, 95 consistently represent business."

If anyone has doubts that corruption and bribery are rife in Washington, DC, they need only compare public opinion with legislation. Recent polls discovered that the majority of Americans believe that closing the wealth gap between the rich and poor should be a governmental priority. To achieve this most Americans favor increased taxes on corporations and the wealthy, increasing the minimum wage, introducing single-payer health care for all, and dramatically reducing the cost of higher education. In a pure democracy, these policies would be enacted. In a representative democracy, such as the US,

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Ten Years of Schooling

by Eric Garbison

Editor's Note: This article is a reflection on the tenth anniversary of the Cherith Brook Catholic Worker*, in Kansas City, Missouri.*

When Jesus said, "**Blessed are the poor**," he was making the claim that those on the margins are exceptionally loved by God. In contrast to a society that shames or scapegoats the poor, the society of God is a place where the last are first, the unloved are loved, and the publicly humiliated are held in great esteem.

The Gospels also judge the first to be last. "**Woe to the rich**," Jesus states in Luke, his counterpart to blessing the poor. Wherever Christians are comfortable and affluent, we have distorted the Gospel. Dominant society wants to make poverty the problem. But Jesus was constantly diagnosing wealth as our malady. In order to proclaim good news to our world, we must give attention to the real economic inequality of our day.

Feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and welcoming the homeless, Peter Maurin reminded us, are to be done "at a personal sacrifice." This claim pushes what is often called "charity" today. It moves us to solidarity. "**Remember those who are mistreated as if you are mistreated**," Hebrews, 13:3.

There are many ways to sacrifice for others. Time and talents are a fine place to start. Money and possessions reflect an awareness that authentic community embodies economic patterns where "no one has too much and no on has too little." I have personally found safety and status

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Corruption

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one would assume that at least some of these policies would see the light of day, but corporate lobbyists push hard in the opposite direction.

And so we have the spectacle of a Republican tax bill dramatically widening the wealth gap by permanently lowering the taxes for corporations and the rich. According to numerous polls, only 28-32% of the electorate supported the bill, but nonetheless it was rushed into law with virtually no debate. One of the last holdouts against it, a self-professed fiscal conservative from Tennessee, Bob Corker, changed his vote when a provision was added which will earn him and other large property holders like President Trump millions of dollars. Corker did this despite the fact that he is already the fourth richest member of the US Senate. Apparently, greed knows no limit.

To make matters worse, Republican leaders, who touted the bill as revenue neutral despite every independent review saying it would swell the deficit by 1.5 trillion dollars, are more and more willing to admit that their next goal is to gut social spending. US Representative Mark Sanford, a Republican from South Carolina, says that the deficit will be so large that "There is no way out. The tax bill is the nail in the coffin on driving the absolute mathematical necessity of reform to entitlement programs." Food Stamps, Medicaid, Medicare, education, and even Social Security are all heading for the chopping block, cuts that will exacerbate the wealth gap to unprecedented proportions.

The notion that Congress will have no alternative to cutting social spending is reinforced by lobbyists from the military industrial complex who have driven military spending to unimaginable heights. President Trump is proposing a $54 billion increase for the Pentagon even though we already spend more than the next eight largest-spending countries combined. Since 1960, the world has seen a 75% decline in the percentage of gross domestic production allocated to military spending. France now allocates 2.26%, Sweden 1.03%, Canada 0.99%, while the US sets aside 3.28%. It's small wonder that many nations have a higher standard of living than the US.

And as my friend Tim McCaffrey pointed out to me yesterday, Social Security is not an entitlement at all. It's a fund every working American paid into, a fund that might not be in financial trouble if the government had not raided it time and again to pay for undeclared wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, and elsewhere.

As the tax cut became law, New York University Law School professor of taxation, Daniel Shaviro, was interviewed on National Public Radio. After refuting claims that the bill would benefit ordinary Americans, Shaviro apologized for using strong rhetoric, but could only describe the bill as "a scam" and "a heist."

Lest we make the mistake of concluding that only one political party is corrupt, we need only look at voting on questions like gun control, military spending, and support for states like Israel and Saudi Arabia. Democrats, just like Republicans, routinely throw public safety and human rights under the bus to appease powerful lobbies.

But Peter Maurin reminds us:

People say:
"They don't do this,
they don't do that,
they ought to do this,
they ought to do that."

Always "They" and never "I".

People should say:
"They are crazy for doing this
and not doing that, but I don't need
to be crazy the way they are crazy."

The Communitarian Revolution
is basically a personal revolution.
It starts with I not with They.

One I plus one I makes two I
and two I makes We.

"We" is a community
while "they" is a crowd.

Ade Bethune

And so, we must continue to shelter the homeless, feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, visit the sick, free the prisoner, and bury the dead. We must lift up the lowly and fill the hungry with good things. We must beat swords into plowshares, and let the truth set us free. We must be a joyful people, passionate for justice, unafraid of reprisals, and confident in God. Our witness must be continuous and so contrary to the empty promises of wealth and war that we become a leaven for the radical transformation of our ailing society into one which values its most needful members and loves its enemies.

As Saint Francis of Assisi said on his deathbed, "Let us begin, for until now we have done nothing." Ω

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CATHOLIC **RADICAL**

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Founded in 1933 by Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin, the Catholic Worker is a lay movement serving the poor while denouncing injustice and proclaiming peace. We are not tax exempt. We rely entirely on the generosity of our supporters to meet our expenses. We welcome volunteers, letters, poetry, articles, artwork, and donations.

Touting Our Radical Past

by Claire Schaeffer-Duffy

The undoing of federal agencies, the greed, the unapologetic indifference to the Common Good emanating from Washington, DC sometimes has me wondering if the future means a return to city- states, a time when one's immediate geography, rather than country, defined allegiances and identity.

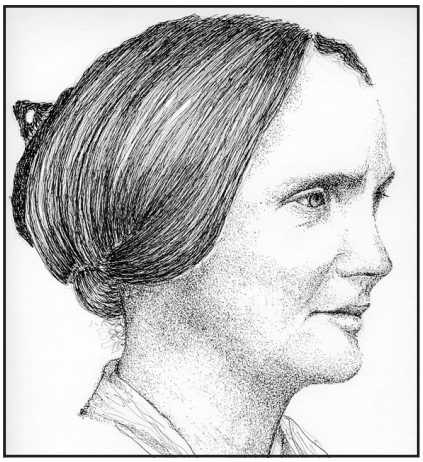
If so, then I am glad to live in Worcester, a city now eager to celebrate its radical, nonviolent history. In January, our City Council unanimously approved a resolution for a commission to build a statue in honor of Abby Kelley Foster, Worcester's homegrown pacifist, abolitionist, and advocate of women's equality.

The vote is the first step of an initiative that will take two years to complete. Yet it's a significant one. With it, our local officials gave a resounding thumbs up to remembering a woman whose life exemplified unrelenting commitment to human equality and well-being.

At the January meeting, six council members rose to the mic to give personal endorsements. Celebrating our history is good for tourism, said one. Abby cared for the people of Worcester, said another. She is a relevant heroine for these times and this city as it continues to welcome immigrants, said the mayor, who proposed the resolution on behalf of the Worcester Women's History Project and the Center for Nonviolent Solutions.

Born January 15, 1811, Abby Kelley grew up in Worcester, the seventh daughter of Quaker farmers. She was considered one of the most educated women in New England for her time. Kelley was introduced to pacifism and the anti-slavery movement while teaching at a local Quaker school. Influenced by her work with abolitionists Angelina Grimké and William Lloyd Garrison, she became an "ultra," advocating not only for the abolition of slavery but full civil equality for blacks. In addition to war, she opposed all forms of government coercion and did not want its intervention in eliminating slavery. Abolitionists who embraced her radical, nonviolent position were dubbed "Kelleyites."

Kelley emerged as a prominent voice in the Anti-Slavery Society, serving as lecturer, organizer, and fund-raiser. She and husband Stephen Symonds Foster, a



"Bloody feet, sisters, have worn smooth the path by which you have come up hither."

Abby Kelley Foster

fellow abolitionist, traveled extensively on behalf of the Society promoting black emancipation and civil rights. Like many abolitionists, she advocated for women's equality. Because of her, Worcester hosted the first National Women's Rights Convention in 1850. Its progressive platform called for securing the "natural and civil rights" for all women, including those held in slavery.

Liberty Farm, the Fosters' home located in Worcester's Tatnuck neighborhood, was a stop along the Underground Railroad. Neighbors, I am told, frequently saw runaway slaves helping out with farm chores and never turned them in, as the law required.

Kelley suffered for her public activism. She was stoned, ousted from speaking venues, maligned as a "Jezebel" by anti-slavery activists who considered her egalitarianism a threat to the social order. The denunciations did not deter her. She spoke to mixed gender audiences, thought to be "promiscuous" in those days, and while on lecture circuits, often shared her platform with ex-slaves, risking vigorous disapproval from the audience. "I rejoice to be identified with the despised people of color," she once wrote to a friend." If they are to be despised, so ought their advocate to be."

Monuments memorializing war are in cities and towns all over this country. Almost all are partisan in their commemoration of victories or losses. Few tell of the price paid to achieve the "just cause." The statues of generals astride muscular horses that adorn many of our parks reveal nothing of the howling devastation of the Civil War. Even the iconic memorial commemorating Marines at Iwo Jima, for all its strain and grit, remains mute about the battle's results—tens of thousands of maimed and dead young men.

No bloodbath accompanied Kelley's achievements. The nonviolent power she employed required no exclusion, no bombing of homes, no dismembering of bodies. In the century following her death, women all over the world would gain the right to vote. (American blacks gained the right in 1870, but not effectively so until nearly a century later, after a long civil rights struggle.) The inclusion of women in the political process represented one of the biggest power shifts in modern history. And it was realized nonviolently.

I doubt our council members knew all the details of Kelley's story. Had they been her contemporary, they might have found her radical nonviolence too risky, too unnerving. Today, they cherish her courage. Her work for social justice and human rights is a point of hope for them.

So often our actions for peace and justice seem puny, like a message in a bottle that no one is reading. Yet those works contribute to the current of nonviolent social change pulsing throughout human history. Sometimes hidden. Always life-giving. Kelley's statue will commemorate its vitality. That is well worth remembering. Ω

Schooling

(Continued from Page 1)

to be the toughest challenges. They are often what keeps us locked into systemic injustices such as racism and other forms of fearing the "other."

Faithful living will cost us most or all of these—time, gifts, possessions, safety, status, identity. Learning to be better while not clamoring to be better off is a lifelong journey filled with fits and starts that are easily sidetracked by desire for comfort or claims of entitlement. And yet, only when we take such a pilgrimage will we move from paternalism and privilege to solidarity, from human communities that single out status, ethnicity, or nationalism, to the Beloved Community of God.

Mutuality

Over the years, I have been guilty of oversimplifying our belief in equality. Sometimes I assumed our commitment to equality implied that there is no leadership. But I have come to accept that learning to follow doesn't mean I must avoid all offering vision or withholding a needed insight. Indeed, there have been times I have withheld leadership simply on principle at vital moments and when others were asking for it. If I refuse to take the lead, I may be depriving the group of a needed role at a needed time.

Followership is essential to the body of Christ. When I follow, I acknowledge that the woman currently in the lead sees and understands something I do not; I embrace my need for guidance, and I trust her ability. It may mean following guests, following volunteers, or following even the so called "lesser" members of community, no matter how awkward it seems at the moment. Living in community is about discerning where and when you need to be led and then following with grace and enthusiasm. Following means lots of time and energy, listening actively, and acknowledging that each person brings something to our common life that is essential. In authentic community, we discover that each person is in some way both guest and host.

Jesus models this when he follows the Spirit of God. The Spirit pushes him into deserts or storms the seas around him. The Spirit of God leads Jesus as She invites Him to banquet halls and kicks Him out of synagogues, thrusting Him among both amiable and hostile crowds. Even to the end, Jesus follows Her from the charismatic entry into Jerusalem to the humiliation of His cross.

Woven into the egalitarian and servant life of Jesus is the conviction that folks deserve to be treated with equal dignity, their gifts and presence received by all, and to be given their place at the podium of our life together. It's not simply a question of how to welcome the gifts of those who have been left out; we must constantly be looking to acknowledge leadership in places we have been conditioned to overlook or to notice when we have arrogantly pushed our way to the head of the line. Leading and following well is a dance.

Ade Bethune

Release

When communities give into the pressure to become bigger, more effective, more bureaucratic, more successful by the standards of dominant culture, then it's time to give more things away. Downward mobility is a solution for the Church in our post-Christian world. Where Christians have consumed more than our share and stuffed our bellies full, where we have justified endowments, glorified in our building projects, inflated staff salaries and expensive programming for the comfortable, we must call for renunciation. As the institutional Church continues to flounder, I believe God is helping us divest when we were not willing to do it ourselves.

We need a new call to voluntary poverty—to work for free and with a free conscience. Divesting of our material wealth and social collateral is one way to claim the abundance of the Divine Life. We need to practice greater economic foolishness as a living parable of the richness of our interdependence in Christ.

Pray without ceasing

In washing, drying, hanging, folding, sorting, hoeing, watering, dumping, turning, spreading, scrubbing, sweeping, wiping, flushing, dusting, mopping, chopping, rinsing, stirring, mixing, fixing, replacing, cleaning, emptying, filling, hauling, raking, shoveling, the Catholic Worker way is to see and claim the divine life when surrounded by the mundane. It calls us to explore the God incarnate in the unremarkable events of every day. If we rush through the now to get to some future event, we have potentially missed that divine-mundane. The Biblical expression to "**pray without ceasing**" can be a chance to do every act and experience every moment as prayer.

When sorting clothing donations brings boredom, isolation, or wishing that your life was more exciting and meaningful, read Jean-Pierre de Caussade or Kathleen Norris. When mopping the floor for the hundredth time leads to fearing or regretting the dullness of life, read Matthew 6:25-34 or Brother Laurence. If while scrubbing pots and pans you wish you were doing something sexier or more radical, read Jesus' wilderness temptations or Dorothy Day's journals.

Swarming matters

Swarms are an amazing phenomenon of bee life, and nothing gets a beekeeper more animated. A swarm happens when a queen decides to leave a hive. Secreting her pheromone on the way out, the queen invites a huddle of worker bees to escort her on her journey. If the conditions are right, a new feral hive will be established in some hollowed tree, or a lucky beekeeper will catch it.

Hives swarm when they are crowded, when old queens are making way for new ones, or when young queens don't want to risk a fight. Sometimes swarms offer relief to an overcrowded hive; other times they weaken an already impotent one.

We beekeepers love to brag about catching swarms, but we hate to see our hives diminished by this self-imposed eviction. We like to think we can prevent, predict, or redirect a hive that is showing the signs, although by then it is often too late. But swarms have many important outcomes. They create feral hives in nature outside of human shenanigans. They

diversify the gene pool and help weak hives to die. Ultimately, swarms remind us that... we are not really in control.

At one point we dreamed and wrote a lot about roots and stability. I still dream of such things, but lately I have come to accept that, like bee swarms, community leavings are ultimately good. It is a natural process for folks to come and go, although even the best leavings can be accompanied with feelings of tension, loss, sadness, and introspection—all healthy but hard.

Like swarms, I believe God uses mobility to create new communities where none existed, to send out new leaders into new vocations and to give stale communities a fresh start. And, though not all closings are a sign of a problem, God can close communities when things are diseased or infested. I've come to accept that through these cycles of comings and goings we learn about sin and grace, redemption and hope. Ω

Solar Power

In their 2017 Christmas newsletter, Saint Francis-Saint Joseph Catholic Worker, of Cincinnati, Ohio, announced: *The house depends on the generosity of many donors to help us support and serve our guests. We occasionally receive a donation that helps us upgrade the physical building itself. A recent gift showcases the love of one couple for each other and for our house and the men living within. Mary and Jerry, long-time supporters, were approaching their 40th anniversary and wanted to celebrate their years together in a meaningful way. Instead of spending money on themselves, they made a generous donation to the House to be used to install solar panels that will provide pollution-free energy and help reduce our monthly energy costs. The panels will be installed within the next few months, and Mary and Jerry's gift to the house and the men it serves will provide a continual reminder of their caring spirit and generosity.*" Ω

Catholic Worker Wisdom

Editor's note: We receive many Catholic Worker newsletters from around the world and are often touched by their wisdom. Here are a few recent examples.

Judith Williams
Waukesha, Wisconsin

In Corrie Ten Bloom's *The Hiding Place*, her sister Betsie is hit by a Nazi. Her face bleeding, she says to Corrie, "I feel so sorry for him."

Donald Trump tossed paper towels to devastated Puerto Ricans and stranded, suffering immigrants at airports. Is it possible for us to say, "I feel so sorry for him?"

The New York Times's best-seller *27 Psychiatrists on the Dangerous Case of Donald Trump* spells out his psychiatric illnesses: narcissism and paranoia. Donald traumatizes all of us daily. Will our families be incinerated by nuclear war, or —equally bad— will we kill millions of North Koreans?

Ade Bethune

What would Betsie Ten Bloom do? As brutal female guards struck women prisoners, Betsie told Corrie, "We have to do something for them." Corrie thought she was talking about the prisoners. Betsie was talking about the guards.

Let us pray for Donald Trump and work to quickly remove him from the presidency. I pray daily for Donald, and my vigil sign shows a large pink peach and the word IMPEACH.

Jordan Hoiberg
Santa Ana, California

...I was raised Presbyterian, but never developed much in my faith through the "Sunday Christian" approach.

It's much harder not to believe now though. After about the tenth time a homeless person asks you to pray with or for them, you have to believe in what you are doing. You find your own hopes and aspirations tied to the same wellspring of charity and mercy as those you serve. I believe this is what Peter Maurin means when he calls the poor the "ambassadors of God." Their existence is a persistent reminder of how to live in relation to Christ.

...I found one of my friends by the riverbed. It was night. The Santa Ana winds had just picked up and destroyed her tent. I found her sleeping on the ground with a blanket and two pregnant cats in a carrier. She asked me to pray with her, so we prayed for shelter.

Another friend I found at the civic center. She was crying because somebody had stolen all her belongings. All she wanted was a brush to pull the knots out of her hair. She asked me to pray for a hair brush, which we did.

These kind of things are important to me. They remind me that I don't have to be a service provider to be a good Catholic Worker, I just have to be willing to interact with people in ways which other people can't, or won't. I just have to be able to treat people in ways our society all too often tells us not to....

Rachel Stoll
Winona, Minnesota

...We are not doing enough to end hunger and homelessness in Winona County. We are not doing enough to build a community of people who can stand together against white supremacy, patriarchy, and the injustices of industrial capitalism. We are not doing enough to communicate our joys, sorrows, needs, and ideologies with the readers of this newsletter. The life of a Catholic Worker is held together by the tension of doing something but knowing that what you do is never enough....

In our darkest hours, we have all felt hopeless and questioned the value of our work, but the words of Dorothy Day help shed light, and show us that all we can do in this world is "throw our pebble in the pond and be confident that it's ever widening circle will reach around the world...." Ω

David Stafford

by Scott Schaeffer-Duffy

My family lived in public housing until my father took $500 my grandfather gave him from winnings he made gambling to put a down payment on a small house. My mother sewed some of our clothing and bought some from a mail order catalogue. We all wore hand-me-downs. We lived in a white, working class neighborhood and went to public schools where we could never afford "hot lunch." My siblings and I mowed lawns, shoveled snow, babysat, and sold things door-to-door to earn money. Once we found real jobs, we contributed to the family.

David Stafford was the only black person in my class. He attended school every day in a suit and bow tie. I never saw him mistreated, but I also never saw anyone socialize with him, and, while I was chosen for school plays and leadership in school groups, David was not.

On a playground dare, I hit my third grade teacher, Miss Gillian, lightly with a stick. The principal thought my behavior was funny. I think David Stafford would have been sent to reform school.

I never knew where David's family lived, but I suspect that $500 would not have secured his family a mortgage. Even as a child, I thought his suit and tie and extra polite demeanor were attempts to blunt prejudice.

While I grew up working-class poor, we never went hungry. Our clothes were never so out of style that we were ostracized or ridiculed. With money I scraped together working in restaurants, I was able to go to college. I don't know if my employers would have hired David. While I encountered some snobbery from rich kids at college, I never drew the kind of scrutiny that David did whenever he entered a room. Although my starting line was far behind wealthy Americans, I was still miles ahead of David Stafford. From everything I saw, there was no other reason for that discrepancy than race.

In retrospect, it is obvious to me that David and all African Americans deserve an apology, compensation, and assurances that future generations will not be discriminated against ever again. Ω

LETTERS

Dear Scott,
Trying to forget the evil in me that came up recently.

A friend that lives near the church shooting in Texas spoke of the way the shooter should have died, and I agreed.

So, thank you for "No One Is Evil," in your recent newsletter.

"We must never forget that all of us [even the shooter] are God's children, and we don't have to right to cast anyone out of the family."

Thanks.

Marcel Saint Germain
North Smithfield, Rhode Island

Dear Scott & Claire,
I was very impressed by the last issue of *The Catholic Radical*. It contained a very sharp article on nonviolence which specifically referenced the confrontation in Charlottesville, Virginia. It also reprinted the strong poem of Dorothy Sölle.

I've given that copy of *The Catholic Radical* to the young demonstrators from the immigrant-rights group, Cosecha. They spent Thanksgiving at Maryhouse after demonstrating at the Macy's Thanksgiving parade. A fine group of young people clearly committed to nonviolence.

Bill Griffin
New York, New York

Dear Scott,
We must admit, we are disheartened at the disproportionate amount of attention you have given in *The Radical* lately to the condemnation of anti-racist activists in Charlottesville who carried weapons (but who didn't kill anybody). We, too, are pacifists. We, too, believe that carrying weapons is not the true way to peace. However, the emphasis you place on calling out those who were trying to prevent lethal violence to a vulnerable community seems misguided. We have not read in your newsletter many articles devoted to condemning the ubiquitous presence of police, who carry weapons at all times, and who often use those weapons to hurt vulnerable communities. This seems hypocritical, and we imagine that many who openly support white supremacy are grateful for your ignoring one type of violence, while highlighting another.

It was also startling to read that, in the same issue, you proudly wag a finger at Cornell West who was understandably relieved when the anti-racists with guns saved his life, while scolding the rest of society for "throwing into the wastebasket" those who sexually assault women and children. Do you think you could show the same compassion to Cornell West that you ask the rest of us to extend to rapists?

The fact that those with guns were the only people who showed up in Charlottesville in large enough numbers to prevent a massacre (Eric Martin's recent article in the NY CW points out that not a single Catholic clergy member was present in Charlottesville) should convict those of us who hold fast to our nonviolent principles, not to draw our self-righteous criticism while we sit back at a safe distance.

Brenna and Eric Cussen Anglada
Saint Isidore Catholic Worker Farm
Cuba City, Wisconsin

Editor's Note: We oppose all violence by individuals, groups, institutions, and states. We have a high expectation

that nonviolence will be practiced by Christians working for peace and justice. We do not base this expectation on our own imperfect witness, but on Jesus' teaching and example. We recognize Gospel nonviolence can be very costly, but believe it provides the most effective means of liberating humanity from hatred and fear. Scripture and the lives of saints like Francis of Assisi, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Dorothy Day bolsters this faith. We believe God calls us to forgive all repentent sinners, even rapists.

Scott,
I want to let you know I was moved by your "Integrity" article. Truly, the commandment of Jesus that we forgive and love our enemies is hard and even scandalous, but nonetheless at the deepest heart of the Gospels. I know how deeply challenged I am by the truth that loving God and loving the human beings I consider most hateful are one and the same in the mystery of Christ.

Carl Siciliano
New York, New York

Dear Claire & Scott,
The Catholic Radical is always interesting and provocative in the very best sense of the word. Your comment in the December/January issue about "begrudgingly giving" a dollar to a panhandler struck a very personal chord. It was late last winter, Katja and I were on Central Avenue in Albany, walking back to where we'd parked the car. A young (Aren't they all young, at our age?) couple were sitting on the sidewalk, backs against a storefront, a paper cup between them. We paused. I reached into my pocket, pulled out two singles and a five, put the two singles in the cup, and continued on. I'd only gone 30 feet or so before being overtaken by pangs of guilt. Reaching again into my pocket, I pulled out the five, walked back and handed it to the young man, who again said, "Thank you."

Feeling redeemed, I was surprised when an older man approached me and began talking in Spanish. I don't speak the language, but it was clear he was asking for a handout. Surprised and taken aback, I said I'd just given all I had in that pocket to the young couple. ("In that pocket" was, of course, the operative phrase.) The young man, still sitting on the sidewalk, reached out and gave that five dollar bill to the older man. Humbled and feeling about six inches tall, I returned to our car. It took but a few moments to realize the gentle lesson I'd just been given was a generous gift... one to share.

Paul Rhem
Greenville, New York

Dear Claire and Scott,
It was a pleasant surprise to discover how much the thinking in the December/January issue of *The Catholic Radical* resonates in my own heart: how we have forgotten the prohibition against usury, how much Church finances are based on the bottom line ("best business practices" they call it), how those accused of sexual harassment are condemned out of hand with no chance for redemption. Our own experience of Christ's tenderness and forgiveness should make us the first to reach out with compassion and healing to those who have sinned.

It's the time of the coming of the Prince of Peace, the King of Love. May it be a season filled with joy and comfort for you and yours. I send a special blessing on the work you do for others as you follow in the footsteps of Dorothy Day.

Rev. John Doyle
Boston, Massachusetts

Dear Scott,
I was a bit down about the current political situation, but was gladdened to read that Saint John's [Catholic church on Temple Street in Worcester] is now housing the homeless at night.... I was saddened by the article in which was related the hostile reception that the young foks received at your daughter's outing ["Harassment at Horseneck"]. I also commend your courage on the issue of the many who have been accused of sexual misconduct. The bottom line is *peace* is the greatest word in any language, and your opposition to the great evil — war and killing — will always have my support.

Phil Brewer
Rutland, Massachusetts

Catholic Worker Calendar

February 13 — Mardi Gras Sing Along: Come join us for a rousing night of song. We'll provide the lyrics, back up, food, and drink. 7 P.M., 52 Mason Street.

February 7 & 21, March 7 & 21 — Evening Prayer: Join us for prayer and Taize chant at 7 P.M., 52 Mason Street.

February 17 & March 10 — Vigil to Reverse the Gun Culture: Join us at The Gun Parlor shooting range from 12:30-1:30 P.M., 170 Prescott Street, Worcester.

March 30 — Stations of the Cross: Join us for a procession through the streets of Worcester with stops to reflect on Christ's suffering in our city, nation, and world today. Noon- 1:30 p.m., 52 Mason Street. Followed by soup and bread.

Mason Street Musings

I met two good Samaritans the first week-end in January. Like the original care-giver, both were thorough in their compassion. Worcester was encapsulated in a wave of absurdly cold Canadian air on the Saturday Susan Willard called. She was at the train station with C, a calamitous woman. Ousted from a sublet in Fitchburg and low on cash, C who was hobbling around on crutches, came into Worcester for medical care. She had intended to take the train to Littleton to stay with a friend, but he reneged on the hospitality, so here she was stranded. Susan had called a lot of places seeking shelter on C's behalf and was exhausted. Susan's husband had died recently, after a long illness, and all she wanted to do was go home and crawl into bed.

Did I have any suggestions?

Because we had a full house, I offered C "just the week-end" in our son Aiden's bedroom, which we use when all other beds are occupied. (Aiden stayed elsewhere.) When Susan returned Monday to pick up her homeless friend, she gushed gratitude for our assistance. This surprised me. I merely made up a bed and laid an extra seat at the table; whereas Susan gave up a Saturday to assist a woman in need.

"It's very little," I said.

"Yes, but a lot of small acts add up to something large," Susan replied.

On Sunday, I found myself chatting with Peter Shoreys, who heads the Saint Vincent de Paul Society at Our Lady of Good Counsel Catholic Church in West Boylston. He was concerned about Trina, a homeless woman he befriended. He had given her several rides to keep her out of the cold and now wanted to do more. She

was well-spoken, yet oddly taciturn about her life, he said, describing some odd behaviors that indicated schizophrenia. When I recommended a skilled social worker, Dave recorded the information carefully, double-checking the phone number, as if Trina was kin and not a stranger. He had connected with her.

The corner of Fourth Street and Walnut in Louisville, Kentucky is where Thomas Merton saw God shimmering out from the strangers walking past him. Suddenly, he was overwhelmed with the realization that he loved all these people, that they were his and he theirs. "It was like waking from a dream of separateness, of spurious self-isolation. . . . This sense of liberation from an illusory difference was such a relief and such a joy that I almost laughed out loud. . . I have the immense joy of being [human], a member of the race in which God Himself became incarnate."

Maybe the original Good Samaritan had a similar vision. Maybe the hospitality he offered was merely an expression of what he saw — that we human beings are of one Divine Piece. God knows we need such illuminations now when our president touts racist policies and advocates a merciless insularity. To be a Good Samaritan is subversive.

Susan dismissed my praise for her generous attention to C. Of course she couldn't abandon the woman to the bitter cold. She was a human being!

And C. has not abandoned us. Five days after she left, she asked to return. We gave her the woman's bed that opened up since her first departure. She may be here a while. It's possible this could be "one of those small acts adding up to something large." Ω **Claire**

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